<u>Committee Name</u>: JOINT SURVEY COMMITTEE – RETIREMENT SYSTEMS (JSC-RS)

Appointments

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Clearinghouse Rules

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Committee Hearings

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Committee Reports

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Executive Sessions

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Hearing Records 89hr_ab0480

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Record of Committee Proceedings

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State of Wisconsin \ JOINT SURVEY COMMITTEE ON RETIREMENT SYSTEMS AND THE RETIREMENT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

June 29, 1988

BLAIR L. TESTIN RESEARCH DIRECTOR

ROOM 203, 110 E. MAIN STREET MADISON, WI 53703 (608) 266-3019

TO:

Members of the Retirement Research Committee

FROM:

Blair Testin, RRC Staff 3.7.

RE:

Issue--WRS Pre-Retirement Death Benefits

PRESENT LAW. WRS law now provides death benefits relative to actively employed participants who die before retirement based upon the participant's age at death. If the participant was age 60 or over (55-protectives) on the day of death, the surviving spouse is eligible for the "automatic joint/survivor annuity" that would have been payable had the employee retired and selected the joint/survivor annuity on the date of his or her death.

However, if the participant was under age 60 (55-protectives) on the date of death, the only benefit that is payable to the surviving beneficiary is the employee accumulation account with interest credited thereto. For WRS participants who were hired before 1/1/82, the amount of interest credited each year is the full effective rate of interest. However, for participants newly hired on or after 1/1/82, the amount of interest credited currently to employee accounts is at the rate of 5%.

ISSUE. The current age requirement to qualify for the automatic joint/survivor annuity upon the death of an actively employed participant reflects a severe "cliff" in benefit design. The difference in value of surviving benefit just before and after the qualifying age of 60 (55-protectives) may be as much as 300% or more. Also, we allow participants to retire as early as age 55 (50-protectives) with actuarial discount, but the protection of the automatic joint/survivor annuity does not apply for another five years. This represents a significant shortcoming in the WRS plan design. Every year several active participants die shortly before qualifying for the joint/survivor protection, resulting in a severe reduction in benefits to the survivor beneficiary.

RRC ACTION. The RRC has regularly recommended reducing the age for qualification of the automatic joint/survivor annuity to the earliest age at which participants may retire with actuarial discount--55 for general employees and 50 for protectives. This provision was included in the original recommendations of the RRC for the 1987 session and were contained in 1987 A.B. 265. The RRC again addressed the issue on September 10, 1987, and recommended that the change in pre-retirement death benefits be introduced as a separate bill for consideration on its own merits. This led to the introduction of A.B. 609 by all six of the legislative members of the RRC.

1987 A.B. 609. This bill, reflecting the recommendations of the RRC was introduced on 10/1/87 and referred to the JSCRS. That Committee recommended the bill as good public policy by a 10-0 vote reflecting rare unanimity. The bill progressed through Joint Finance and the Assembly Committee on Governmental Operations and was passed by the Assembly on 3/1/88 on a vote of 96-0-again, reflecting rare unanimity. The bill was then referred to the Senate and passed the Senate Committee on Governmental Operations on a 5-0 vote, but the Senate refused to concur on a vote of 17-15. It should be noted that the Senate action may have reflected the heated debate on the early retirement legislation, and not necessarily the merits of A.B. 609 itself.

<u>PROJECTED COSTS.</u> The actuary has projected that the proposed changes would require an increase in contribution rates as follows:

- General Employees--0.2% of covered payroll.
- Police -- 0.4% of covered payroll
- Fire--0.6% of covered payroll.
- Elected--0.2% of covered payroll.

The covered payrolls of WRS participants for 1989 are projected to be \$5,241,917,000. Assuming the costs as estimated by the actuary, this legislation would require additional contributions in 1989 of \$11,480,802. Of this amount, the state as an employer would be obligated by \$3,368,924, and local government would be obligated with the remainder--\$8,111,882.

RRC STAFF RECOMMENDATION. RRC staff believes that the current provisions governing pre-retirement death benefits reflect a significant shortcoming in the WRS plan design. Accordingly, it is suggested that the RRC again recommend the introduction and passage of the legislation found in 1987 A.B. 609.

ATTACHMENT;

- 1987 A.B. 609, relating to qualification requirements for an automatic joint/survivor benefit.

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State of Wisconsin \ JOINT SURVEY COMMITTEE ON RETIREMENT SYSTEMS AND THE RETIREMENT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

October 12, 1988

BLAIR L. TESTIN RESEARCH DIRECTOR

ROOM 203, 110 E. MAIN STREET MADISON, WI 53703 (608) 266-3019

Representative David Travis Room 240 North State Capitol Bldg. Madison, WI 53702

Dear Rep. Travis: .

Your letter of October 10 requested information on the death benefits payable to surviving spouses when a participant dies before retirement. Under current law, if the participant dies before age 60 the only benefit that is payable is the participant's accumulation account with credited interest. However, if the participant was 60 or over on the date of death, the death benefit is the higher of the employee's account or the automatic joint/survivor benefit that would have been payable had the participant retired and selected that option on the day of death.

The current law reflects a serious plan design flaw, in my opinion. The Retirement Research Committee has reviewed this issue for several years and has regularly recommended that the laws be amended to permit the automatic joint/survivor annuity option as early as age 55—the earliest age at which a participant could retire with actuarial discount. This legislation was introduced as a separate bill in the 1987 session—A.B. 609. This bill was authored by all of the legislators on the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems, reflecting bipartisan support. The bill passed the Assembly on a 96-0 vote, but the Senate failed to concur on a 15 to 17 vote.

The Research Committee has again recommended that legislation be introduced in the 1989 session to correct this plan design flaw.

Accordingly, Representative Volk, as Co-Chairman of the retirement committees, is having a bill drafted similar to the 1987 A.B. 609. Hopefully, we will continue to have wide support for this legislation, culminating in passage.

I am enclosing a memo to the RRC dated 9/10/87 which describes the issues to a greater extent—including costs. Please contact me if I may furnish you any further information.

Sincerely,
Bless Voits

Blair Testin

Director of Retirement Research

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State of Wisconsin \ JOINT SURVEY COMMITTEE ON RETIREMENT SYSTEMS AND THE RETIREMENT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

September 10, 1987

BLAIR L. TES RESEARCH DIRECT

ROOM 203, 110 E. MAIN STREI MADISON, WI 537 (608) 266-30

TO: Members of the Retirement Research Committee

FROM: Blair Testin, Staff Director

RE: <u>Issue:</u> WRS Pre-Retirement Death Benefits

Present Law. WRS law now provides survivor death benefits for participants who die before retirement based upon the participant's age at death. If the active participant was age 60 or over (55-protectives) on the day of death, the surviving spouse is eligible for the "automatic joint/survivor annuity" that would have been payable had the employee retired and selected the joint/survivor annuity on the date of his or her death.

However, if the participant was under age 60 (55-protectives) on the date of death, the only benefit that is payable to the surviving beneficiaries is the employee accumulation account with interest credited thereto. For WRS participants who were hired before January 1, 1982, the amount of interest credited for death benefit purposes is the full effective rate of interest. However, for participants newly hired on or after January 1, 1982, the employee accounts are credited at the rate of 5% after January 1, 1985.

Issue. The current age requirement to qualify for the automatic joint/survivor annuity upon the death of an active participant reflects a severe "cliff" in benefit levels. The difference in value of survivor benefits just before and after the qualifying age may be as much as 300% or more. Also, we allow participants to retire as early as age 55 (50-protectives) with actuarial discount, but the protection of the automatic joint/survivor annuity does not apply for another five years. This represents a significant shortcoming in the WRS plan design. Every year several active participants die shortly before qualifying for the joint/survivor benefit, resulting in a severe reduction in survivor benefits.

Private Sector. The Retirement Equity Act (REA) of 1984 requires private sector pension plans to provide an automatic joint/survivor pre-retirement death benefit to spouses of participants who were vested at the time of death. Most private pension plans provide vesting in 10 years, but amendments to ERISA law will shorten the maximum vesting period to five years in the near future. The REA Act requires that the joint/survivor benefit be payable to the survivin spouse at the date that the participants would have reached the earliest retirement age--usually 55. Accordingly, most private sector retirement plans provide greater pre-retirement death benefits than now found under the WRS.

Public Sector. A review of the 1984 survey of state public retirement systems published by NASRA (National Association of State Retirement Administrators) reflects the following:

- As a minimum, most states provide a refund of employee contributions with credited interest.
- In addition, a number of states add a lump sum payment such as \$1,000 or 50% of the salary payable at the time of death, after "x" years of service.
- A few states provide life insurance benefits in lieu of a death benefit payable from the retirement plan.
- Many states provide an automatic joint/survivor annuity after meeting certain years of service or age requirements (see NASRA Survey Summary).

The RRC has reviewed this issue numerous times 1985 Session. over the last six years. A.B. 779 of the 1985 session was introduced at the request of the RRC Co-Chairmen (Rep. Volk and Sen. Jauch) to deal with this issue. That bill would have removed any age requirement for qualifying for the joint/survivor annuity. Accordingly, the death benefit payable to a surviving spouse would have been the greater of the J/S annuity or the employees accumulation account with credited interest. The employee account would normally be of greater value if death occurred at an early age, but the J/S annuity would be of greater value if death occurred at ages close to the earliest age at which retirement can occur--age 55 or 50 for protectives. This bill reflected a potential cost of 0.25% of covered payroll on a weighted average basis. The JSCRS found that this bill represented good public policy and recommended its passage. However, because of its late introduction, the bill did not pass during that session.

Actuarial Cost. Improved pre-retirement death benefits were part of the actuarial study that was completed for the RRC in February of 1987. The actuary determined his cost projections based upon a reduction in the qualifying age for the automatic joint/survivor annuit from the present 60 to age 55 (age 50-protectives)—the earliest age at which WRS participants may retire with actuarial discount. The actuary projected that lowering the eligibility for survivor benefits to age 50 for protectives and age 55 for all other participants would increase the contribution rates as follows:

- General -- 0.2% of payroll - Police -- 0.4% of payroll - Fire -- 0.6% of payroll - Elected -- 0.2% of payroll

The projected actuarial costs are slightly higher for the death benefit improvements found in the 1985 legislature because the joint/survivor annuity could be payable at ages before 55/50.

A.B. 265. The improvement in death benefits was part of the package of retirement changes recommended by the RRC at its February, 1987,

meeting, and was included in A.B. 265 (1987) as introduced at the request of the RRC. This bill was first referred to the JSCRS which recommended a substitute amendment thereto which reduced the benefit improvements and funding devices substantially—including the deletion of improvements in the pre-retirement death benefits.

A.B. 462. Death benefits would be modestly affected by A.B. 462 (introduced at the request of the JSCRS Co-Chairs). This bill has already passed the Assembly and was on the floor of the Senate at the close of the July floor session. That bill as amended would provide for crediting of interest to employee accounts for death benefit purposes at the effective rate regardless of when the participant was first hired. Accordingly, this would improve benefits for those hired after January 1, 1982, but this would by no means equal the improvements in death benefits found in the original A.B. 265.

RRC Staff Recommendation. A.B. 265 is currently in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and there is little apparent support for the original bill. Although A.B. 462 is close to passage, the Governor has indicated he would veto that legislation if changes are not included relative to arbitration/mediation. Accordingly, RRC staff recommends that death benefit changes be introduced as a separate bill that may be judged on its own merits and costs. The death benefit changes could either be in the form as found in 1985 A.B. 779 or as found in 1987 A.B. 265. The first approach would have a weighted average cost of about 0.25% of covered payroll, while the second approach would have a weighted average cost about 0.2% of covered payroll.

RRC staff believes that the improvement in death benefits as found in A.B. 265 could be approximately funded from the undistributed gains that are recognized in the biennial budget bill. That legislation authorizes the transfer of \$230 million of undistributed gains in the transaction amortization account, of which about \$160 million will be credited to employee and employer accumulation accounts. This amount has not been dedicated for any specific purpose and could provide the majority of funding necessary for the proposed improvement in death benefits.

Attachments:

- Summary of Pre-Retirement Death Benefits from 1984 Survey by Natl. Assoc. of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA).

DEATH BENEFITS

- Alabama ERS 1. Less than age 60 with 1 to 10 years service or age 60 or above with 1 to 10 years service, a return of contributions and interest and the equivalent of previous fiscal year's salary if death occurred within 90 days of last work day.
 - 2. Before retirement age and from 25 to 30 years of service spouse has a choice of lump sum benefit as above or survivor's benefit of deceased member's retirement benefit under disability. If no spouse lump sum to beneficiary.
 - 3. Any age with over 30 years of creditable service spouse receives survivor's benefit of 50% of deceased member's benefit. If no spouse, lump sum to beneficiary.
 - 4. Minimum retirement age and 10 years or more creditable service, spouse receives survivor's benefit of 50% of deceased member's benefit.
- Alaska PERS Amount of a 50% joint and survivor option for a vested member, account balance plus \$1,000 plus \$100 per year of service if member had 1 to 5 year account balance if member had less than one year of service.
- Arizona SRS In general, death benefit is equal to two times the employee's contributions accumulated at interest, current 7%. No difference between occupational and non-occupational death.
- Arkansas PERS Minimum of 5 years service with certain payroll contributions surviving spouse and/or dependent children may draw monthly benefits.
- California PERS Same benefits for either occupational or non-occupational deaths.

 \$5,000 lump sum benefit plus six months pay and return of contributions with accrued interest. Monthly 1959 Survivor Benefit may also be payable for members not covered by Social Security.

 If member was eligible to retire on date of death, survivor may choose monthly allowance in lieu of pay and contributions. Allowance equal to Option 2 allowance member would have received if retired for service on date of death.
- Colorado PERA If member ineligible for annuity, monthly benefits payable to children, widow(er), or dependent parents. Children eligible to age 18, or if both unmarried and full-time student, to age 23. One year of service required, unless death was service-incurred, in which case the requirement is waived. If no eligible survivors, refund of own contributions paid to listed beneficiary.
- Connecticut SERS- Tier I Return of contributions with interest unless pre-retirement death benefit is in force for spouse.

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Tier II- Non-contributory - no payments available unless pre-retirement death benefit is in force for spouse.

- Delaware SERS Eligibility: 5 years of service; Amount: 50% of accrued benefit.
- Florida SERS If regular death (not duty-related), surviving spouse receives refund of member's account or a monthly benefit if participant was eligible to retire.
- Georgia ERS Minimum of 13 years and 4 months provides joint-100% survivor's option with benefit age assumed to be the same as it would have been if member was age 60 or 65, whichever is applicable. Less than 13 years and 4 months provides only a refund of contributions.
- Hawaii ERS Return of contributions plus benefits added to equal one year's salary.

 Minimum Service: one year.
- Idaho PERS Basic benefit equals lump sum of employee contributions plus interest credited at death of non-retired member or at retirement of retired member, less allowances paid, but no death benefit payable a retired member who had elected a joint survivor option. Option at death of active member with five years, inactive member eligible to retire or disability retired member provide monthly income for life to surviving spouse as if member had retired early and elected 100% contingent annuitant joint survivor option if beneficiary waives the lump sum entitlement. Cause of death is not a factor.
- Illinois SERS Survivor Annuity: \$1,000 lump sum; monthly benefit to spouse only maximum \$400 monthly at age 50; spouse with children maximum \$600 monthly
 at any age; retirement annuity contributions + interest to beneficiary.
 Note: For member under social security, monthly benefit is reduced by
 one-half of social security benefit. Lump Sum Death Benefit: If no
 survivor annuity payable beneficiary receives total contributions +
 interest and if death in service up to 50% of annual salary. Minimum
 benefit of 50% of members earned pension.
- Indiana PERF If the member has less than 15 years service the beneficiary receives return of contributions plus interest. If fifteen years or more, full joint survivor retirement benefit.
- Iowa PERS A lump sum equal to member's plus employer's contributions, together with interest credited thereon. Beneficiary may elect monthly life annuity or life with 10 years certain.
- Kansas PERS 1. Accumulated contributions paid to designated beneficiary.
 - 2. If spouse is sole beneficiary and member is eligible to retire and dies, spouse may elect benefits as joint annuitant in lieu of member's accumulated contributions.
 - 3. Spouse or minor children or dependent parents receive 50% final average salary if member is killed in service-connected accident, for life or until spouse remarried or until youngest child attains age 18.

 Minimum benefit of \$100. Also, \$50,000 lump sum benefit.
 - 4. Insured death benefit, any cause, to age 70, 100% current annual rate of compensation.

- Kentucky PERS Five years service required if contributing to system, otherwise, 12 years service required. If 65 or older, 48 months service required. Benefits paid to beneficiary in lump sum, 5 or 10 years guaranteed, or for life of beneficiary. Occupational death for police/fire/hazardous provides benefits to spouse and dependent children
- Louisiana SERS- Refund of employee contributions only.
- Maine SRS If surviving spouse and child or children, or child or children, an annual amount equal to the average final compensation of member; if no eligible children an annual amount equal to 2/3 of the member's average final compensation.
- Maryland EEs If member is age 55 and has 15 years of service, or eligible for service retirement, spouse can elect a monthly benefit.

 Less than 1 yr. of service 1 Yr. of annual salary plus member's contribution and interest.

 More than 1 Yr. of service 1 Yr. of annual salary plus member's contribution and interest.
- Mass. SERS Widow paid minimum of \$140 per mo. + \$80 per month 1 child + \$60 per mo. each additional child. Children must be under 18 or 22 if full time student. Payments to widow terminate on remarriage. 2 yrs. service and at least 1 yr. married required.
- Michigan SERS Basic benefit reduced by actuarial factor to provide 100% joint and last survivorship allowance to spouse.
- Minnesota SRS Spouse entitled to same benefits as active participant -- a refund or a 50 J/S annuity.
- Mississippi PERS Refund of contributions if less than 10 years credit; if member has 10 or more years credit and spouse married to member five or more years, automatically deemed eligible for option 2 or may elect a refund of contributions and interest in lieu of monthly benefits.
- Missouri SERS Monthly Benefit = 50% x (Life Income Annuity accrued to date of death), provided deceased employee had 10 or more years creditable service. Spouse of at least 2 years designated benefiticary would receive benefits for life or until remarriage; or surviving unemancipated minor children would receive the benefits until they reached age 21; or monthly benefit = 100% joint and survivor option, provided deceased employee or vested member was at least age 60 with 15 or more years creditable service. Spouse would receive benefit for life.
- Montana PERS (a) Lump sum return of accumulated contributions and accrued . interest, plus one month's salary for each year of service up to a maximum of 6 years, or

44.00

(b) Monthly survivorship allowance if deceased member had five or more years of service.

- Oklahoma PERS The surviving spouse of a deceased active member is given a choice of:
 - A. Accumulated contributions of member, or
 - B. Monthly benefits for lifetime paid under Option A.

Oregon PERS - No differentiation.

- Pennsylvania SERS If member is not qualified for retirement by virtue of age (60) and has less than 10 years of service, member's contributions including interest are paid to Designated Beneficiary. If member is qualified for retirement, total value of annuity payable at time of death is paid to beneficiary.
- Rhode Island ERS Refund of accumulated contributions. Lump sum payment equal to \$400 per year of credited service of the member, subject to a minimum of \$2,000 and a maximum of \$8,000.
- South Carolina SRS Refund of contributions and lump sum equal to annual salarybeneficiary eligible for monthly income for life under certain conditions.
- South Dakota 40% of highest annual salary in last three years plus 10% for each Ret. & Ins. child maximum 90% (100% effective 7/1/82).
- Tenn. Cosolid.

 Ret. System

 Survivor annuity to spouse if active member has 10 years of service at time of death

Noncontributory employees hired prior to 7-1-81 and contributory employees: Choice of annuity described above or refund of twice the member's accumulated contributions and interest if death occurred within 120 days of service.

- Texas ERS With less than 20 years service, beneficiary receives refund of contribution plus interest, plus 5% for each year of service. With 20 years or more of service, a surviving spouse may select a lifetime annuity or a 120-month benefit.
- Utah SRS Refund of member contribution account. If spouse or dependent children additional benefit of 50% of member's five-year average annual salary paid or \$1,000 for every year of service whichever is less.
- Vermont SRS Minimum 25% AFC to dependent spouse, or return of contributions.

 Eligibility-20 years of service or age 55 w/10 years of service.

 Benefit Dependent beneficiary 100% survivorship, or return of contributions.
- Virginia SRS 1/2 average final compensation payable from combined sources of retirement, workers compensation and one-half social security, plus retur of contributions. Age 65 100% Jt. and Last Survivor annuity; age 55 with 5 years service or 30 years service any age prior to age 65.
- Washington PERS Less than 10 years refund of contributions; over 10 years either refund or monthly benefit to surviving spouse.

- West Virginia PERS With 10 or more years of service (3 participating) spouse's benefit guaranteed. Designated beneficiary can receive benefit if there is an insurable interest.
- <u>Wis. (WRS)</u> No distinction between occupation and non-occupational. Full refund of employee contribution plus interest. If over age 60, still employed, and beneficiary is spouse or dependent, benefit computed assuming employe retired day before death.
- Wyoming SRS A lump-sum payment of members funds, matching funds, and interest on both is paid. If employee was vested, lump-sum payment above is an option or a retirement allowance for survivor is available.



MEMBER:

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE DEBT MANAGEMENT WI SENTENCING COMMISSION

January 17, 1989

Representative Richard Grobschmidt Senator Robert Jauch Retirement Research Committee Madison, WI 53701

Dear Representative Grobschmidt and Senator Jauch:

Last session, the Assembly unanimously passed Assembly Bill 609, which addresses an inequity in death benefit payments to surviving spouses. The bill was killed in the Senate.

I would like to draw your attention to this legislation and hope that the Retirement Research Committee will act favorably on it again this year.

If you have any comments on this legislation, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

DAVID TRAVIS

State Representative 81st Assembly District

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THE ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PROFESSIONALS

Members of the Committee on Tourism, Recreation &

GLORIA TOIVOLA, *President*UW-Superior, Political Science Program
Superior, Wisconsin 54880

EDWARD J. MUZIK, Executive Secretary 139 West Wilson Street—Suite 210 Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3254

Telephone 715-394-8482

Telephone 608-257-6177

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Educational Policies ED POND UW-Eau Claire

Legislation LARRY BARNETT UW-Milwaukee

Salary and Fringe Benefits GORDON PARKS UW-Whitewater

Women and Minorities
LANET POLANSKY
JW-Stout

Government Operations

From: Edward J. Muzik, Executive Secretary

Date: October 24, 1989

Re: AB 480 and the hearing on October 25

TAUWP strongly supports AB 480 which changes current law specifying that at age 60 a covered employe of the Wisconsin Retirement System is deemed to have retired on a lifetime joint survivor annuity the day before the employe died.

The proposed bill reduces that to age 55 for general employes and teachers and to the earliest age that protectives and others may retire.

The Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems unanimously endorsed this bill.

The importance of this change is illustrated by a tragedy that happened to one of our active members, a renowned physics teacher at UW-Stevens Point. He and two of three sons drowned last June. He was 57 years old. His wife has no lifetime annuity. Her financial condition is unknown to me but clearly she would be better off with a lifetime annuity.

Peace of mind is the most important thing that this bill brings to active employes who love their spouses.

Age 55 is the age chosen because this is the earliest age at which a general employe or teacher can retire under present law. An earlier age is provided for those whose earliest age of retirement is less than 55. For example, the earliest age at which protectives may retire is 50.

Thank you for your consideration.

WISCONSIN

RETIREMENT CONSORTIUM
Ken Opin, Chairman
c/o WFT

2021 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI 53704 (608) 244-6877

February 26, 1990

To:

Senator Gary George and Representative Walter Kunicki

CoChairmen of the Joint Finance Committee

From:

Ken Opin, Wisconsin Retirement Consortium

RE:

Bills supported by the Consortium

The Wisconsin Retirement Consortium, which represents the participants and annuitants of the Wisconsin Retirement System, has voted to support the following bills, currently in your committee:

AB70 -- Providing for Qualified Pension Rollovers

AB250 -- WRTA Annuitant Representation

AB480 -- Pre-Retirement Death Benefit Bill

The Retirement Consortium urges you to support these bills, and to exec them from your committee.

If you have any questions about our positions on these or other bills, feel free to call me at (608) 244-6877.

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jtfinrtr

March 1, 1990

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Mrs. Lucille Perrone 6643 Columbus Drive Middleton, WI 53562

Dear Mrs. Perrone:

As I am the Co-Chairman of the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems, Representative Loftus has forwarded to me your recent letter regarding your concerns as they relate to the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS).

Under current law, the WRS determines survivor death benefits for participants who die before retirement based upon the participant's age at death. If the active participant was age 60 or over on the date of death, the surviving spouse is eligible for the joint/survivor annuity that would have been payable had the participant retired and selected that annuity. However, if the participant was under age 60 at the time of death, the only benefit payable to surviving beneficiaries is the employee accumulation account with interest credited thereto.

You are correct in stating that an inequity exists when an individual dies prior to the age of 60. In an attempt to rectify this situation, I have introduced legislation which would reduce the age requirement for the joint/survivor annuity benefit to the earliest age that WRS statutes permit participants to retire with actuarial discount, 55 years old.

Assembly Bill 480 was recommended as good public policy on an 8-0 vote. It was also unanimously recommended by the Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and Government Operations. It is now in the Joint Finance Committee awaiting final Committee action.

Again, thank you for your interest in this matter and you may be assured of my continued support of AB 480 and please feel to contact me with any additional questions or comments which you may have regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT State Representative 21st Assembly District

cc: Representative Loftus

Mrs. Lucille R. Perrone 6643 Columbus Drive Middleton, Wi. 53562

February 19,1990

Mr. Thomas Loftus Speaker of the Assembly State Capitol Bldg. Madison, Wi. 53703

Dear Mr. Loftus,

I am enclosing a letter which I have written to Governor Thompson regarding Phil's pension.

As you can see, I consider this a very important issue and would appreciate your thoughts regarding the issue.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain

Cordial

Lucille R. Perroñe

MRS. LUCILLE R. PERRONE 6643 COLUMBUS DRIVE MIDDLETON, WI. 53562

FEBRUARY 19,1990

GOVERNOR THOMPSON EXECUTIVE OFFICE 1 STATE CAPITOL BLDG MADISON, WI 53703

DEAR GOVERNOR THOMPSON:

I am writing you because I have a serious concern regarding the State of Wisconsin pension plan for University of Wisconsin.

It is my understanding that if my husband dies before the age of 60 the State of Wisconsin contribution to his pension plan will not be available to me as beneficiary.

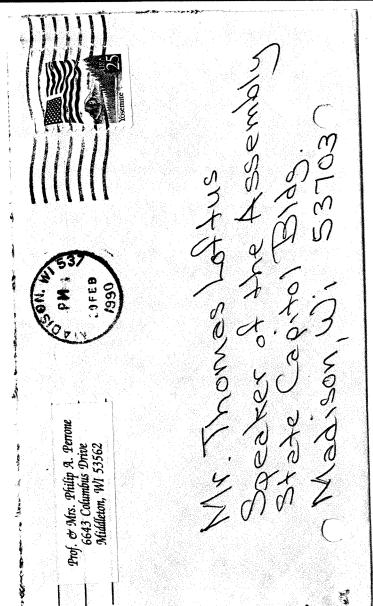
My husband, Philip A. Perrone, has been a Professor at the University since September, 1962. Phil has given a great deal of his life to Wisconsin schools, is always available for students, has done a great deal of research, received many grants, has been chairman of his department, is highly recognized in his field, and received the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1986, an award voted by his colleagues and students.

He has committed a great part of his life to the State of Wisconsin. I feel it's unfair if in the event that something happened to Phil before he is 60 that his family would not receive nearly half the benefits he has worked all these years to earn.

I would like to know your thoughts regarding this situation and what it will take to have this changed.

Coordially,

Lucille R. Perrone c.c. Russell D. Feingold, State Senator Thomas Loftus, Speaker of the Assembly



MRS. LUCILLE R. PERRONE 6643 COLUMBUS DRIVE MIDDLETON, WI. 53562

MARCH 5, 1990

MR. RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT STATE REPRESENTATIVE STATE CAPITOL P.O. BOX 8952 MADISON, WI. 53708

DEAR MR. GROBSCHMIDT:

Thank you for your prompt attention to my letter of the 19th.

I am pleased that you have introduced legislation to reduce the age requirement for the joint/sursivor annuity benefit.

Since my husband, Phil, is only 53 years old and has already been a professor at the university for over 27 years, you can understand my concern regarding the loss of this benefit if something should happen to Phil before age 60.

If there is anything that I can do to help you regarding Assembly Bill 480 please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thank you for your concern regarding this matter.

Cordially

Lucille R. Perrone

MAR 1 3 1990

March 13, 1990

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Members

Joint Committee on Finance

FROM:

Bob Lang, Director

Legislative Fiscal Bureau

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 480: Modification to Death Benefit Payments Under the

Wisconsin Retirement System

Assembly Bill 480 would lower the age requirement for the payment of a joint survivorship annuity upon the death of a Wisconsin Retirement system The bill was originally referred to the Joint Survey (WRS) participant. Committee on Retirement Systems. The Joint Survey Committee, on a vote of 8 to 0, found that the bill represented good public policy and recommended its The bill was then referred to the Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and Government Operations, which recommended passage by a vote of 12 to 0.

BACKGROUND

Under current law, in the event of death of a WRS participant who has not begun receiving a retirement annuity or a disability benefit and who has not closed his or her account, a survivor's (death) benefit will be payable. amount of the survivor's benefit will vary depending on the participating employe's age at time of death, the number of years of creditable service, the amount of employe required contributions in the individual's retirement account, and the relationship of the beneficiaries to the decedent. benefit will always include the full amount of employe required and employe additional contributions (whether made by the employe or on behalf of the employe by the employer) plus accumulated interest.

If the participant was under age 60 (55 for protectives) at the time of death, the amount of the benefit payable to the beneficiary is the amount in the participant's Employe Accumulation Account, including the appropriate amount of interest which has been credited. This benefit is paid as a lump sum. If the participant was age 60 or over (age 55 or over for protectives) but had not yet taken a retirement annuity, the death benefit payable also Members, Joint Committee on Finance March 13, 1990 Page 2

includes matching amounts from the Employer Accumulation Account to fund a joint survivorship annuity. The benefit is paid on a monthly basis rather than as a lump sum.

SUMMARY OF BILL

Assembly Bill 480 would lower the age requirement for the receipt of a joint survivorship annuity rather than a lump sum payment. The age threshold (of the decedent) would be reduced from the current age 60 (age 55 for protectives) to the minimum age to qualify for a WRS annuity (currently age 50 for protectives and age 55 of all other participant classifications). The intent of the change is to eliminate a benefits "cliff" that exists for the beneficiary of a general employe if the participant's death occurs just before age 60, compared to a death just after age 60. (The Retirement Research Committee indicates that the difference in benefits just before and just after the current qualifying age can be as much as 300%). It might be noted, however, that a similar cliff effect would then exist for general employes around the age 55 threshold (50 for protectives) rather than around the age 60 threshold (55 for protectives). Nonetheless, this change would make the new joint survivorship death benefit age threshold consistent with the current law minimum age at which a WRS participant can retire and qualify to receive an annuity.

FISCAL EFFECT

Reduction of the age qualification for receipt of a joint survivorship annuity constitutes a benefit improvement and would result in increased liability to the WRS. Thus, since the proposed change would have an impact on the funding of the WRS, it would likely result in an adjustment to employe and employer contributions in 1991 and beyond. (The contribution rates have already been set for 1990.)

The consulting actuary (Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Co.) to the WRS and the Retirement Research Committee has projected that this benefit change would require an increase in WRS contribution rates, based on the provisions of Assembly Bill 480, as follows:

Members, Joint Committee on Finance March 13, 1990 Page 3

TABLE I

Projected WRS Contribution Rate Increases by Participant Classification

WRS Participant Classification	Projected Increased Contribution Rate (as Percent of Payroll)
General Protective (law enforcement)	0.2% 0.4
Protective (firefighters) Elected and Appointed Officials	0.6 0.2

The resulting total costs, based on the estimated contribution rate increases and 1991 projected payrolls, are indicated in Table II below:

TABLE II

Estimated Costs of AB 480 (Based on Projected 1991 Payroll)

WRS Participant Classification	Projected 1991 Payroll*	Increased Annual Cost Based on Projected Contribution Rate Increases
General	\$5,136,300,200	\$10,272,600
Protectives (law enforcement) Protectives (firefighter	337,264,800 97,228,900	1,349,100 583,400
Elected and Appointed Officials	56,037,500	112,100
TOTALS	\$5,626,831,400	\$12,317,200

*Estimated based on 1988 calendar year actual payrolls, increased at the current assumed average annual percentage increase (5.6%) in covered employe salaries.

Under provisions of 1989 Wisconsin Act 13 (the 1989 Early Retirement Act) and beginning in calendar year 1990, any modification in the funding of the

Members, Joint Committee on Finance March 13, 1990 Page 4

WRS that requires a change in contribution rates shall be accomplished by having half of any increase or decrease applied to the employer contribution rate and the other half of the increase or decrease applied to the statutory employe benefit adjustment contribution or general contribution rate. based on the figures presented in Table II, increased employer-required contributions in calendar year 1991 would amount to an estimated \$6,158,600, with increased employe-required contributions equalling a like amount. Currently, 30% of these employer-required amounts (\$1,847,600 all funds) would run to the state as employer, while the remaining 70% (\$4,311,000) would run to local units of government as employer. Further, based on the current funding split for the state payroll, approximately 44.6% of the indicated state employer-required amount would be GPR-funded (\$824,000 GPR), and the remaining 55.4% (\$1,023,600) would represent all other sources of funding. The first fiscal year in which there would be increased state costs would be the 1990-91 fiscal year. Total increased state costs are estimated in that fiscal year of \$412,000 GPR and \$511,800 (all other funds), since there would only be increased costs to the state for six months in that fiscal year (January 1991 through June 1991).

It should also be noted that since virtually all employers (state and local governments) are currently picking up the entire amount of employes' required contributions, it is possible that any new required employe contribution amount arising under this bill may ultimately also be picked up for the employes under respective pay plans or collective bargaining agreements.

Prepared by: Tony Mason

April 30, 1990

Lucille (Perrone 6643 Colombus Drive Middleton, WI 53562

Dear Ms. Perrone:

Recalling your interest in Assembly Bill 480, which relates to the requirements for receiving an automatic joint survivor death benefit under the Wisconsin Retirement System, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on this legislation.

On Friday, April 27, 1990, Governor Thompson vetoed AB 480. This was an unexpected veto and I am unsure as to what his reasons were for vetoing this important measure. You may be assured, however, that this legislation will be reintroduced when the Legislature reconvenes in January.

Again, thank you for your interest in this matter and as always, please feel free to contact me with any additional questions or comments which you may have.

Sincerely,

RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT State Representative 21st Assembly District

RG:lm

AB 480 Lucille Perrone 6643 Colombus Dr Middleton, W1 53562

Let know of Govs

gov vetoel on



State of Wisconsin \ JOINT SURVEY COMMITTEE ON RETIREMENT SYSTEMS AND THE RETIREMENT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

May 14, 1990

BLAIR L. TESTIN RESEARCH DIRECTOR

ROOM 203, 110 E. MAIN STREET MADISON, WI 53703 (608) 266-3019

TO:

Representative Rick Grobschmidt, JSCRS Co-Chair

FROM:

Blair Testin, RRC Staff / <

RE:

Governor's Veto of 1989 A.B. 480

1989 A.B. 480 reflects studies and recommendations of the Retirement Research Committee over the last four to six years. The bill relates to the benefits payable to surviving spouses of participants who die before termination of covered employment. Under current law, a survivor benefit is determined by the age of the participant upon death. If the participant was 60 or over (55-protective), then the spouse is eligible for the joint/survivor annuity that would have been payable had the participant retired and selected that option on the date of death. If the death occurs before age 60, the only benefit payable is the employee's accumulation account. The difference in value between the employee's account and the potential joint/survivor benefit at or near age 60 may be as high as 300%.

We allow participants to retire as early as age 55 (50-protectives), but usually with actuarial discount for retirement before the normal age. Hence, if a participant anticipates a fatal illness after reaching age 55, the participant may protect the spouse by retiring and selecting a joint/survivor annuity. However, if the active participant dies unexpectedly, the spouse's benefit is severely reduced. The intent of this legislation is to reduce the age for the automatic joint/survivor annuity to the earliest age at which a participant can retire—with or without actuarial discount.

The Governor's message notes there is an inequity caused by the current benefit cliff, but then makes reference to "permanent ages of 55 and 57". The ages in this legislation have nothing to do with the early retirement window of the changes in normal retirement after the window closes. Again, the age provisions were based upon the earliest age at which a person may retire and start an annuity, with or without actuarial discount. This, of course, does establish a cliff based upon age 55, but this age already represents a pension plan policy that early retirement with discount cannot occur before that age. We could have, in fact, designed this legislation to do away with the cliff entirely so that either the employee's account or the joint/survivor annuity would be payable—whichever was greater. However, the actuarial cost of completely removing the cliff was about twice the cost of coordinating minimum age with the earliest age for possible retirement.

The Governor also notes that this legislation provides a mandated cost to state and local employers, and that he could support some change that is "internally funded". We have already adopted one of the Governor's recommendation to fund future changes in the retirement law—equal sharing of cost changes between employer and employee participants. Any "internal funding" perhaps would require tampering with the actuarial assumptions jeopardizing the long-range funding goals of our system.

Rep. Grobschmidt Page 2

I believe it is unfortunate that A.B. 480 was vetoed in that it addresses an admitted inequity in our pension plan. This legislation received unusual support during the legislative process. The bill was first referred to the JSCRS which granted it an 8-0 favorable vote. It then went to the Assembly Committee on Tourism which voted favorable 12-0. The bill was then referred to Jt. Finance which voted 13-2. It finally passed the Assembly 96-0. On the Senate side, the Senate Governmental Operations Committee gave it a 6-0 favorable vote, and the Senate gave final passage on a vote of 26-7.

With this veto, there will continue to be heartbreaking cases of surviving spouses who will receive only the employee's accumulation account because the participant died one or two months before attaining age 60. If I may furnish you any further information on this legislation, please contact me. For actuarial details, please refer to the JSCRS Appendix Report to this legislation.

BT:db

May 16, 1990

Lucille Perone 6643 Columbus Drive Middleton, WI 53562

Dear Mrs. Perone:

Recalling your interest in Assembly Bill 480, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on this legislation.

As you may know, the Legislature reconvened yesterday, May 15, 1990, for a veto-override session. AB 480 was one piece of legislation which we attempted to override the Governor's veto. Unfortunately, the Republicans voted with the Governor on all of his vetoes which prevented the legislature from overriding any of them. The final vote on AB 480 was 62-37, short of the two-thirds needed to override.

Again, thank you for your continuing interest and you may be assured that this legislation will be reintroduced next January. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me with any additional questions or comments which you may have.

Sincerely,

RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT State Representative 21st Assembly District

RG:lm

MRS. LUCILLE R. PERRONE 6643 COLUMBUS DRIVE MIDDLETON, WI. 53562

MAY 8. 1990

MR. RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT STATE REPRESENTATIVE STATE CAPITOL P.O. BOX 8952 MADISON, WI. 53708

DEAR MR. GROBSCHMIDT:

Thank you for informing me that Governor Thompson has vetoed AB 480. I must admit that I too am very disappointed in his veto.

Soul listen

It is good to know that the bill will be reintroduced when the Legislature reconvenes in January.

This is really very sad because there will no doubt be survivors who will lose their benefits because of the Governor's veto.

Thank you for all the information you have given me in regard to this bill and I hope you will keep me informed in the future.

Condially

ucille R. Perrove

Enclosures-1

AB 480

September 12, 1990

Dan Thompson League of Wisconsin Municipalities 122 West Washington Avenue Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mr. Thompson:

The July, 1990 issue of "The Municipality" indicates that the League opposed Assembly Bill 480 and supported the veto of this legislation by Governor Thompson. As Co-Chairman of the Legislative Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems (JSCRS), I must state that the League certainly did not share its opposition to AB 480 with the retirement committee that has original responsibility to analyze and make recommendations on all pension legislation. 1989 AB 480 was sponsored by myself and 24 other representatives, reflecting both Democrats and Republicans, and also six Senators from both political parties.

After introduction, the bill was first referred to the JSCRS for analysis and recommendation, and a public hearing was held on Tuesday, September 12, 1989 -- a hearing which was well publicized in the Legislative Weekly Schedule of Committee Activities. During this public hearing several groups testified or registered in favor of this legislation including representatives of the U.W. System, WEAC, the Madison faculty PROFS organization, the statewide faculty TAUWP organization, AFL-CIO, the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers, and the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin. It should be noted that no employer organization registered or testified in opposition to this legislation, nor were any memos in opposition furnished to the JSCRS office by the League, by the School Boards Association, or by the state Counties Association.

AB 480 received unusual support during the legislative process. The bill was reported out of the JSCRS with an 8-0 favorable vote. It then went to the Assembly Committee on Tourism which voted favorable 12-0. The bill was then referred to the Joint Committee on Finance which voted favorable 13-2. It finally passed the Assembly on a vote of 96-0. On the Senate side, the Governmental Operations Committee gave the bill a favorable vote of 6-0 and the Senate as a whole gave final passage of 26-7. Few bills pass the legislature with this degree of support, and I find it difficult to believe that the bill would have passed the Assembly unanimously if the League was truly voicing its opposition.

Dan Thompson September 12, 1990 Page 2

AB 480 reflects studies and recommendations of the Wisconsin Retirement Research Committee over the last 5-6 years. The bill relates to benefits payable to surviving participants of the WRS who die before termination of covered employment. Under current law a survivor benefit is based upon the age of the participant on the date of death. If the participant was 60 or over on such date, then the spouse is eligible for the joint/survivor annuity that would have been payable had the participant retired and selected that option on the date of death. If the death occurs before age 60, the only benefit payable to the surviving spouse is the employee's contribution account with credited interest. The difference in value between the employee account and the joint/survivor annuity at or near age 60 may exceed 300%.

We allow participants to retire as early as age 55, but usually with actuarial discount for retirement before the normal retirement age. Hence, if a participant anticipates a fatal illness after reaching age 55, the participant may protect the spouse by retiring and selecting a joint/survivor annuity. However, if the participant dies unexpectedly, the benefit payable to the spouse is severely reduced if the participant was under age 60. The intent of AB 480 was to reduce the age for the automatic joint/survivor annuity to the earliest age at which a participant could retire with or without actuarial discount.

The Governor's veto message notes that current WRS statutes do reflect an inequity because of the death benefit cliff based upon The Governor's veto note also indicates that he could support some change to the pre-retirement death benefit if it were internally funded, presumably reflecting no direct increase in employer costs. On this point, it should be noted that WRS law has been amended to reflect one of the Governor's recommendations to funding future changes in pension benefits -- equally sharing of any cost change by the employer and employee participants. Although AB 480 carries an actuarially projected cost of 0.2% of payroll, this cost would be shared equally in added contributions by employees of 0.1% and by This would appear to be a minimum cost in order to employer of 0.1%. correct a pension design problem that is recognized by all parties. With the Governor's veto, there will continue to be heartbreaking cases of surviving spouses who will receive only the employee's contribution account because the participant died one or two months before attaining the qualifying age of 60.

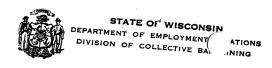
Dan Thompson September 12, 1990 Page 3

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my views regarding this matter and please do not hesitate to contact me with any additional questions or comments which you may have.

Sincerely,

RICHARD GROBSCHMIDT State Representative 21st Assembly District

cc: members of JSCRS



DAVID G. GOURLIE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS SPECIALIST

/37 EAST WILSON ST., MADISON, WIS. 53702 (608) 266-1418

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY ROLL CALL 1989-90 SESSION SPEAKER LOFTUS

SEQUENCE NO. 1013 MAY 15, 1990 1:35 PM

AB 480

OVERRIDE VETO GROBSCHMIDT, R. AB 480 PRE-RETIREMENT DEATH BENEFITS

AYES - 62 NAYS - 37 NOT VOTING - 0 PAIRED - 0

A N NV	NAME		A N NV	NAME		A N NV	NAME	
A	ANTARAMIAN, J.	(D)	A	HOLSCHBACH, V.	(D)	A	ROBSON, J.	(D)
A	BALDUS, A.	(D)	Α	HUBER, G.	(D)	A ·	ROHAN, S.	(D)
A	BARCA, P.	(D)	A	HUBLER, M.	(D)	N	ROSENZWEIG, P.	
Α	BELL, J.	(D)	N	HUELSMAN, J.	(R)	A	RUTKOWSKI, J.	(D)
Α	BLACK, S.	(D)	N	JOHNSRUD, D.	(R)	N	SCHMIDT, G.	(R)
A	BOCK, P.	(D)	N	KLUSMAN, J.	(R)	A	SCHNEIDER, M.	(D)
A	BOLLE, D.	(D)	A	KRUG, S.	(D)	N	SCHNEIDERS, L.	• •
A	BOYLE, F.	(D)	A	KRUSICK, M.	(D)	N	SCHULTZ, D.	(R)
N	BRANCEL, B.	(R)	A	KUNICKI, W.	(D)	A	SEERY, T.	(D)
N	BRANDEMUEHL, D.	(R)	A	LADWIG, J.	(R)	A	STOWER, H.	(D)
A	CARPENTER, T.	(D)	N	LAHN, J.	(R)	A	SWOBODA, L.	(D)
A	CLARENBACH, D.	(D)	N	LARSON, R.	(R)	Α	THOMPSON, R.	(D)
A	COGGS, M.	(D)	A	LAUTENSCHLAGER	(D)	A	TRAVIS, D.	(D)
A	COGGS, S.	(D)	N	LEHMAN, M.	(R)	N	TREGONING, J.	(R)
N	COLEMAN, C.	(R)	N	LEPAK, D.	(R)	N	TURBA, W.	(R)
A	CULLEN, D.	(D)	N	LEWIS, M.	(R)	A	UNDERHEIM, G.	(R)
N	DARLING, A.	(R)	Α	LINTON, B.	(D)	N	URBAN, F.	(R)
N	DEININGER, D.	(R)	N	LORGE, W.	(R)	Α	VAN DREEL, M.	(D)
N	DUFF, M.	(R)	N	LOUCKS, S.	(R)	N	VAN GORDEN, H.	(R)
A	FERGUS, S.	(D)	A	MEDINGER, J.	(D)	Α	VANDERPERREN, O	
A	FORTIS, L.	(D)	Α	MOORE, G.	(D)	N	VERGERONT, S.	(R)
A	FOTI, S.	(R)	Α	MUSSER, T.	(R)	Α	VOLK, J.	(D)
N	GARD, J.	(R)	A	NOTESTEIN, B.	(D)	A	WALLING, E.	(R)
N	GOETSCH, R.	(R)	N	OTT, A.	(R)	N	WELCH, R.	(R)
A	GROBSCHMIDT, R.	(D)	N	OURADA, T.	(R)	A	WILLIAMS, A.	(D)
A A	GRONEMUS, B.	(D)	N	PANZER, M.	(R)	N	WIMMER, J. ·	(R)
A A	GRUSZYNSKI, S.	(D)	A	PLACHE, K.	(D)	A	WINEKE, J.	(D)
n N	HAMILTON, L.	(D)	N	PORTER, C.	(R)	A	WOOD, W.	(D)
A	HARSDORF, S.	(R)	Α	POTTER, C.	(D)	Α	YOUNG, R.	(D)
A	HASENOHRL, D.	(D)	A	POTTER, R.	(D)	N	ZEUSKE, C.	(R)
A	HAUKE, T.	(D)	N	PROSSER, D.	(R)	N	ZIEN, D.	(R)
A	HINKFUSS, R.	(D)	A	RADTKE, R.	(R)	Α	ZWECK, B.	(D)
	HOLPERIN, J.	(D)	A	ROBERTS, V.	(D)	Α	SPEAKER	(D)

NO VACANT DISTRICTS